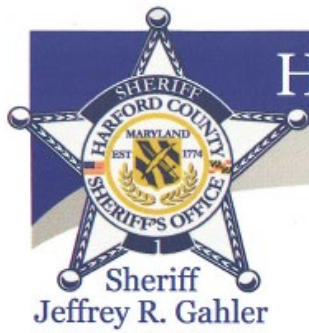




HARFORD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

COURAGE HONOR INTEGRITY

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF SHERIFF JEFFREY R. GAHLER
HARFORD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE, MARYLAND
BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION INTEGRITY, SECURITY, AND
ENFORCEMENT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Good morning, Chairmen McClintock and Jordan, Ranking Members Jayapal and Raskin, and distinguished members of the Committee.

My name is Jeff Gahler, and I am honored to serve as the elected Sheriff of Harford County, Maryland, a suburban/rural community of 270,000 residents located northeast of Baltimore.

I come before you today as a career law enforcement officer with over 40 years of service dedicated to keeping our citizens safe.

After the 2024 election, thanks to the leadership of President Trump, our federal government acted swiftly to secure our southern border. In collaboration with state and local law enforcement, federal authorities moved decisively to identify, apprehend, and remove hundreds of thousands of criminal illegal aliens who were actively victimizing American communities.

Unfortunately, rogue state legislatures, like mine in Maryland, are actively fighting against these law-and-order efforts. They are passing radical legislation designed to create safe havens for criminal illegal aliens, outlawing successful public safety programs and severing our ability to communicate with our federal law enforcement partners.

Let me remind this Committee, the 287(g) program was signed into law by President Bill Clinton - a Democrat. In 2016, under President Obama - another Democrat who actually expanded the 287(g) Program, I signed a formal agreement, making Harford County the 2nd county in



Maryland to partner with the federal government to screen every single inmate booked into our county jail.

Yet last year, the supermajority partisan politicians in my state outlawed this very program. If that wasn't bad enough, they went a step further and also passed anti-American legislation gagging local law enforcement and making it illegal for my deputies to coordinate or even communicate with certain federal law enforcement agents, setting up a situation where local law enforcement could be in conflict with federal law in order to meet these new radical state restrictions on cooperation.

That is why I, along with 2/3rds of my fellow Maryland Sheriffs, filed a federal lawsuit against the State of Maryland to strike down these unconstitutional and dangerous sanctuary mandates.

I am here today to urge Congress to step in and put a stop to these ultra sanctuary policies before more innocent lives are lost.

Under President Biden, the border crisis was no longer confined to Texas, Arizona, or New Mexico. Every state in America was now a border state. Every county was a border county. And every Sheriff in this country is forced to deal with the deadly fallout of President Biden's open-border disaster.

In Harford County, we are nearly 1,800 miles from the U.S. Southwest border. We are a quiet community, with very low crime, we average fewer than a handful of homicides each year. Yet these open-border and sanctuary state policies struck at the very heart of our community in the most tragic way, not once, but twice in the span of roughly twelve months.

- **On July 27, 2022, 20-year-old Kayla Hamilton** - a young woman who had just moved to Aberdeen with her fiancée to begin their life together was brutally raped and strangled to death in her own home. Her murderer was Walter Javier Martinez, a 16-year-old illegal alien and verified MS-13 gang member from El Salvador. Caught at the border in Texas, he was processed as an "unaccompanied minor" under Biden administration policies, he was then released into the interior of our country without a complete background check and took up residence in a rented room right next door to Kayla. **He did not cross our border to seek a better life; he came to kill and terrorize Americans.**
- **On August 5, 2023, 37-year-old Rachel Morin** - a mother of five went for a jog on a popular trail in Bel Air. She never came home. After an agonizing 10-month national manhunt, her killer was apprehended sitting on a bar stool in Oklahoma. Victor Antonio Martinez-Hernandez, an illegal alien who fled El Salvador after allegedly murdering a

young woman there, entered our country illegally, violently assaulted a mother and child in Los Angeles, and then made his way to Harford County to brutally rape and murder Rachel.

Neither of these monsters came to pursue the American Dream. They came to pursue a life of crime and victimize members of our community.

Both of these murders were **100% preventable**. Had our federal government simply enforced existing immigration laws, Kayla Hamilton and Rachel Morin would be alive today. And as we all know, their stories are not the only two – there are stories like these which have occurred in far too many communities across our nation.

As Sheriff, my primary duty is the protection of Harford County, but I cannot police my county effectively when Washington leaves the front door of our nation wide open, and state politicians, who have forgotten the values of our great nation, tie the hands of law enforcement inside our own borders.

We cannot bring back Kayla or Rachel, but Congress can - and must - ensure no other American family endures this preventable heartbreak. It is time to put the safety of the American people ahead of partisan politics. Permanently secure our border, outlaw sanctuary policies, and let local law enforcement do the job we were sworn to do.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.